

# The Four-Fold Purpose of the Church - Part 3

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 26 April 2026

Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[ 0 : 00 ] I want to encourage you to open up your Bibles, if you would, to Acts chapter 2. What does it look like?

So we've sought to answer that question. Then we've moved to the next question, what is the purpose of the church? So if God has put a church together, what are the objectives that he's put in front of them?

Why do they exist? What is the goal of their gathering together? We've spent the last several weeks working through the fourfold purpose of the church. We'll be finishing that out this morning.

We're going to turn to one more question towards the end of our time together, and that is, who is the church? So once we understand what the church is, who makes up the church, and what does it mean to be part of the church, and we'll spend some time looking at that as we wrap up our series this morning.

The Lord has given us a picture, a picture through the Scripture on what a church looks like. We see this interactive community of believers who are fellowshiping with one another, and so we get this picture in full color as we've been reading through the last few verses of Acts 2, verses 42 to 47.

[ 1 : 40 ] Those of us who enjoy sports, I don't know if there's any baseball fans out there, but I think the baseball season has just begun, and I'm sure those of you who enjoy baseball are going bananas.

It's good to enjoy your favorite sport. Well, those of you who know something about sports, my family would once in a while go and enjoy a Cincinnati Reds game, and that was an experience, just being able to go down to the park and to be in the stands and to watch the game, to enjoy some conversation with friends and family who had gathered there together.

But you know how it works. You know, there's the stands. There's people who are sitting in the stands. They may be wearing the same colors. They may even be wearing the jersey.

They often know the stats. They can identify the players. They're excited about when their team wins the game. But at the end of the day, they're just a fan.

They're not a player. There's something quite distinct about a player and a person who's observing and watching the game. Right?

[ 2 : 53 ] The players belong to the team in a really formal way. And so that when a victory happens, it's not that the fans are patting themselves on the back, look what we accomplished, but it's the players who get to take credit for the victory that they've been able to achieve.

The difference between a fan and a player is the sense of belonging. The sense of attachment. The sense, not just that they're sharing the same space, but there's an obligation, a commitment they have to one another.

And that's what we've been coming to observe in our passage this morning and throughout the last several weeks as we've been working through Acts chapter 2. We've seen this portrait. This portrait of belonging.

This portrait of togetherness. This portrait of connectivity that's taken place among these believers. They're not loosely attached. They're committed. And they belong to one another.

There's two words that have stood out to us as we've been kind of working our way through this passage. And the first is found for us in verse 41. It says, and they were added to one another.

[ 4 : 07 ] They belong together. There was a numbering, a specific grouping. There was an addition that took place. They were counted. And the sum total of them was collectively emblematic of their belonging to one another.

Then we find that they were devoted to the fellowship. We saw that a little last week. And the definite article that's used there where they were devoted to the teaching and the fellowship. This specific group, this identifiable group of individuals they belong to. And so Acts chapter 2 is not just describing fans. It's not just describing for us a group of people who are loosely attached. It's describing a group of individuals who belong together and have recognized that there's a commitment now that they have to one another because of what Christ has accomplished for them. They're a team. They're a family. And as we use the metaphor of the scripture, they're a body. They belong. So we've been looking at this fourfold purpose. We began a couple of weeks ago.

[ 5 : 14 ] And the first purpose is worship. We've called bow, to bow ourselves in worship to God. And this is what we've said, living with the spotlight on Jesus.

That Jesus is the center. He's the objective. He's the focal point. He's the reason for our gathering. And He's the one who helps to, not only to inflame our worship, but to motivate our worship, our activity towards one another.

It spills out in a number of different ways. Yes, worship is singing. But worship is also praying. It's teaching. It's fellowshiping. It's serving.

It's also working and playing and resting. That we know that all of this is meant, every sphere of life is meant to be punctuated and saturated by worship.

It's the expression of our life. Whether, therefore, you eat or drink or whatever you do, you do all to the glory of God. And that is our worship because we want Jesus, His glory to be in the center.

[ 6 : 20 ] We also have come to see the importance of discipleship. And this is the build category. This is the constructive part of what we do.

The purpose of our being together is to build one another up, to equip one another in the work of the Lord. We said that discipleship is leading every person one step closer to Jesus.

It's not a formal program, although it can be. It's meant to be this informal, life-on-life, interactive kind of thing that we do together so that in every interaction that we have with one another, the goal is how to stir one another up to love and good deeds.

It's to actively and deliberately seek to build up those that God has put us in fellowship with. That's the essence of discipleship.

It leads to growth. It leads to the kind of maturing body of believers who are growing in their love for Jesus and growing in love for one another.

[ 7 : 29 ] The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Colossians 1.28 when he says, Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

That's the goal. Forming Christ in others. Seeking to develop and nurture them so they look more like Jesus. And as we can become more like Jesus, the desire is to help stimulate that kind of growth in others as well.

That leads us to fellowship. Fellowship is the belonging part of what we do. And we have said this, actively pursuing the health of the whole.

That fellowship isn't just eating meals together. Fellowship isn't just sitting around and shooting the breeze. But true Christian fellowship has a goal.

The goal of true Christian fellowship is what we find in Hebrews. It says, To stir one another up to love and good deeds. It's to help them grow. It's found out in all the one another commands that we looked at last week.

[ 8 : 33 ] The list of all the things that we are meant to do for one another. It flows out of this true Christian fellowship that we have.

So the goal of the Christian life is not autonomy. It's not self-sufficiency. It's stimulating and building relationships to help us understand our togetherness.

That we belong together. And that once we fellowship in the right way, then it becomes a catalyst for all of these other things that God has called us to. That Christian fellowship is the foundation for discipleship.

Remember from Mark chapter 3 verse 14, it says that Jesus, he selected the 12 so that they might be with him and they might send them out to preach. It begins with fellowship.

It begins with their belonging with Christ and seeing and enjoying his ministry before he could ever send them out to be representatives of his message. They had to know him first.

[ 9 : 33 ] It's also the catalyst for evangelism. And we'll look at that more in just a moment. But do you realize if you want to be an effective evangelist, you need to understand your commitment to

the body that God has placed you in community with.

If you want to be a great evangelist, if you want to share the gospel, it often happens in relationships that God has allowed you to enjoy. So those are the three of the four purposes. Let's turn our attention now to this final one. What is evangelism? What is evangelism? We're going to see first of all that evangelism is our way to bless the world.

It's our way to bless the world. We see that right here at the outset in verse 47. Acts chapter 2 verse 47, at the very end of the chapter, it says this, praising God and having favor with all the people. And notice what happens. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Favor with all the people. This word for favor is the Greek word charis.

[10:44] It's the word for grace. And we get to see here, here in Jerusalem, the outflow of God's favor on his people is showing up.

And not just, not just remaining with them, but pouring out and spilling out. And so that all those who are in Jerusalem get to enjoy the benefits of this favor of God on the people of God as they are interacting and they are experiencing and enjoying the benefits of God's grace to them and it's flowing out in this expressive way so that all of Jerusalem gets to enjoy this measure of God's favor. They see it. They experience it. So we see, we've seen this authentic community of believers and what are they doing? Well, there's personal sacrifice involved.

There's selling possessions. There's meeting needs. There's attending temple. There's sharing meal. There's praising God. There's glad and generous hearts. There's a life change that's taken place among these people.

They are different. There's something substantial. There's something weighty about what's taken place here. Something different. These believers in Jerusalem were genuinely interested in other people.

[12:05] They are moved from being those who are self-serving to being those who are self-sacrificing. And it's visible. It's clear. It's obvious. They were blessed by God and they became a blessing.

And that's a key point I want to just draw out here. That by experiencing the favor of God, now they become the conduits of God's favor, God's blessing to a people who they don't know God.

And that God then adds to their number, the number of the church, day by day those who are being saved. Because as the grace of God is resident in his people and it's pouring out on the city, the city gets to see the benefits of that favor and that blessing as well.

We see the foundations of this in the next chapter, Acts chapter 3. We're going to get to in just a couple of weeks. And I want to just give us a quick reminder of what happens there and just draw your attention back to this, the blessing of God.

You know the story. Peter and John, they'll go to Jerusalem during the time of prayer. And while they're there, there's a man who's brought, this lame man, he's been lame since birth and there he is, he's laid at the temple.

[13:23] And he's asking for money but Peter and John, they said, hey, we're not going to give you any money but I got something better for you. Peter says, he heals the man, the man leaps up for joy and as a result of this work, this astonishing, this astonishing work creates this heart of joy in the people there in the temple.

And they're praising God. Peter capitalizes on the situation and he now preaches this message but there in Acts chapter 3 verse 13, notice where he starts.

He starts this way. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered over to be and denied in the presence of Pilate when he decided to release him.

He begins right back in the promise that was given to Abraham. God has not forgotten his people. And what we begin to see working its way out here in Jerusalem is the confirmation that God has not forgotten his promises to Abraham and is actually going to use those promises and we're going to see them worked out now in the ministry of Peter and John in the salvation of those who come to faith in Christ there in Jerusalem.

Notice in verses 25 and 26 of chapter 3. It says, Do you notice what's happening?

[15:14] Do you see what's taking place? God promised Abraham, going back to Genesis chapter 12, verses 2 and 3, He says, I will make of you a great nation.

I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

That was the promise that God made to Abraham 1,500 years before Jesus came and now in Jerusalem that promise is happening.

It's happening right before their eyes. The blessing that was promised to Abraham is now extended through his son, Jesus Christ, who now has come to make a way for those who come to be saved to now be a blessing, to receive the blessing and to be a blessing.

This promise to Abraham confirmed and sealed and now being fulfilled through the ministry of Christ and his men, Peter and John and the rest of the apostles.

[16:23] Christ blessed us so that we would be a blessing. And so that through us, going back to this promise, in you all the nations will be blessed.

This promise worked out through us by receiving the gospel, enjoying the benefits of Christ's work and now being a blessing to the world around us.

And this is important because when we often think about evangelism, I think we're prone to think about conversion. We're prone to think about making converts, maybe closing the deal, maybe having the best arguments, maybe presenting the best case, making sure that people not only understand, but they come to faith in Jesus Christ.

We want to win these arguments. We want to have the best crafted apologetic. We want to make sure that we are doing the closing the deal, what all the words that you want to say.

But the spirit and the goal of evangelism is to bless. It's simply to be a blessing. And then, as a result, allowing God to do the work.

[17:36] Because notice in verse 47, who adds to the number day by day those who are being saved? The Lord adds to the number day by day those who are being saved.

Our goal then is to be a blessing regardless of the outcomes and let God do the work that God is going to do. Trust Him with that work.

And so we entrust those results to the Lord because it's the Lord who then brings that work. So we need to understand the significance of this goal.

The goal of God doing this work and having, blessing the world as an objective for our hearts.

Second, I want you to understand that evangelism is our way to love our neighbor.

It's our way to love our neighbor. You know, we're all familiar with the way that Jesus summarized all the law and the prophets, right? There's 600 plus commands that are given to us in the Old Testament.

[18:42] Jesus narrowed it down to two. The first is love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second, it says, is like it to love your neighbor as yourself.

How do you know that you love God? Well, you know that you love God when it expresses itself in real, tangible, physical, obvious, outworking of love to the people that God has put you in community with, relationship with.

So I can know that I am loving God when I'm growing in love with the people that God has put me in community with. So, our evangelism is meant to be an outworking of our love for the world.

that it's not contingent upon their response to us or their kindness to us or their reception to the gospel. That regardless of whether they reject the gospel or not, that I still have an obligation to love them.

And so, in loving them, I'm investing in them in seeking to do a work to welcome and invite them into a relationship with Jesus as well.

[19:52] Of course, the greatest blessing that our world could ever enjoy is the blessing of Christ. And notice, back in chapter 3, verse 26, what was Christ's goal?

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. Even Jesus' goal was a goal of blessing. Blessing others through the gospel, turning them from their wickedness and turning them to himself.

That was his goal. So, how do we do this? How do we, if the objective and the goal is to bless the world and the outworking of that strategy is to love our neighbors, how do we do that tangibly?

Well, this word bless is an acronym and I want to just introduce you to it briefly. And I want to

encourage you, this will just not only make it memorable, but for those of you who feel very overwhelmed about evangelism, this isn't my spiritual gift, I feel really awkward about this, I'm not

sure if I can do this, you might feel intimidated, this will make it easy and this will help you step into it in a way that should take the edge off.

First is, begin to pray. Begin to pray. That's the B. See, if anyone's going to come to faith in Christ, it has to be a work of the Lord.

[ 21 : 14 ] The Lord added day by day those who are being saved and so if it has to be a work of the Lord, we as God's people need to pray for the Lord to do His work. We need to ask and invite the Lord to stimulate hearts, to give us opportunities, to open up our eyes so that we can see the opportunities that are there and have courage to step into those opportunities.

The second here is to listen to them. That's the L. To listen to them. Take an active interest in the people that you either work with or the people that you study with, you're going to school with, the people that you enjoy activities with, wherever you might be.

Pray for opportunities to get to know others better. Be deliberate about asking good questions. Not just the kinds of questions that are surface. How was your day?

How's your family? Those kinds of things which are appropriate and good but more meaningful questions. That relationships go deeper. Not just how are you doing but hey, I noticed that this is taking place over here.

How is that going for you? How can I encourage you? I imagine that you're struggling because of this. I noticed this and I'd like to know more. Digging below the surface, asking deeper questions, cultivating a relationship that goes more than just a surface level, really taking an interest in the people that God has put you in community with so that you can come to know them and grow in compassion for them as the Lord had compassion for us.

[ 22 : 53 ] The E is eat with them. Eat with them. There's something about a good meal that opens the door. Opens the door for relationship. It kind of helps to take away any of the distractions.

It helps to remove some of the pressure of that interaction. It helps to allow those things to be a little less formal. God has designed it that way.

It's His design and we need to press in to this design and learn the benefits of fellowship and hospitality and eating good meals together that stimulate deeper conversations.

The first S is to serve them. That means we should look for opportunities to help come alongside and meet actual physical needs for our neighbors.

Depending upon the season maybe that means raking the leaves or mowing a lawn or shoveling the walk. Maybe it's simple things like making a meal and going to maybe watching a pet.

[ 24 : 00 ] I don't know. Fill in the blank. You can find ways to actually serve your neighbors. It follows the pattern of the Lord Jesus who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

As we have the heart of the Lord Jesus in serving our neighbors you will come to find that that helps also be a gateway not only to meet tangible needs but to demonstrate your concern for your neighbors so they want to know you more.

And then finally when all those pieces are in place you will find this last component will be very easy for you and that is to share your story of grace. Share the gospel with them.

It says in Acts 2.11 that we keep hearing them tell us in our own language the mighty works of God. Well that's the opportunity that God will give all of us.

Being able to tell the mighty works of God because those doors will become open. God will create crisis in some way in their life and when that happens if you have developed and nurtured a friendship who are they going to ask for help?

[ 25 : 14 ] Who are they going to bring their questions to? They're going to bring their questions to you and God will have given you a golden opportunity to share the mighty works of God that he's accomplished in your life and open the door for a chance to share the gospel.

One of the most powerful ways that we can do this is through our personal testimonies. Your story of how Jesus is the hero in bringing you salvation delivering you from your sin and as we develop those stories of grace or those testimonies you'll find that that would be a very easy gateway for you to share the gospel.

Any of you who haven't yet created a testimony or those of you who you created your testimony a very long time ago and aren't acquainted with it anymore I want to just encourage you we have a new tool that we're developing so that you can do this more easily.

Pastor David is putting that together and anyone who's interested in a kind of a simpler model of how to put your testimony together kind of leading you through a set of questions that may be a real benefit to you.

This summer we'd like to prioritize this purpose of evangelism and neighborly by inviting you to meet with one another. So Caleb if I can have that next slide we're going to call this Won't You Be My Neighbor?

[ 26 : 38 ] And any of you who've maybe I'm dating myself here Mr. Rogers I'm sure most of you younger kids have no idea who Mr. Rogers is but he would he would ask this question Won't You Be My Neighbor?

And he would sing a little ditty which I will not I will not do for you. During the summertime the last several years what we have done is we've had something called Sunday Nights in the Park and that's been a great way for us to enjoy fellowship together.

This year what we like to do is maybe switch gears a bit and instead of doing it in one place we want to encourage you to do fellowship in lots of different places with the friends and families of your choice.

So still twice a month and the first the first time you meet on that during the month we want to encourage you to meet with another family or group of families here from Maranatha growing in fellowship growing in relationship enjoying a meal going out and maybe going to a game together doing something together that stimulates some measure of Christian community.

Then that next Sunday the second Sunday of that month whatever whatever week you choose we would like to encourage you to still meet with that family but invite somebody that doesn't know Christ and the goal is to do what we see here in Acts chapter 2 verse 47 and that is when people the unsaved people see your fellowshiping together your relationship with one another they see how God is working in your hearts and creating Christian community that the favor that God has given to you they will be able to see and in some way be able to participate in in joy so that God might draw their hearts to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ himself.

[ 28 : 34 ] This QR code that we have here we want to encourage everybody who is at least thinking about this whether you have families in mind already or not we want to encourage you to register so that two things can happen one we know who is registered and who is a part of this and two for those of you who want to be a part of it but don't know of a family that you could partner with then we can access this other resource and be able to pair you up with others who would like to do this as well.

This is an experiment but I think this might be a great way for us to get to know each other better and to see how easy it can be to neighbor in our communities.

So we want to encourage you to do this. There will be a Maranatha Minute article that will come out in the next week or so about this too. So that's the purpose of the church. That's what God has called us to do.

Now I want to turn our attention in this last few moments to this final question. Who is the church? If God has given these objectives to his people well who are his people and how do we know?

Well what happened in Acts chapter 2 was not invisible. It wasn't vague. It wasn't artificial. It was real. It was physical.

[ 30 : 00 ] It was obvious. This group of individuals who gathered together. Now what was true of them? And there are seven things that were true and I want to just work through these things quickly and briefly.

Who is the church? First, the church is those who are saved by grace through faith. Those who are saved by grace through faith. We understand that we are deserving of God's wrath.

That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and what we deserve because of our sin is God's punishment. God's wrath. But, he made a way through his son, Jesus, who lived a perfect life, who died the death that we deserved, who then rose again and is now seated at the right hand of God so that we can enjoy the benefits of salvation.

That salvation happens not because we earn it, but it happens because of God's grace. And we access that salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ. And once that happens, we recognize that Christ paid for everything. It's not deserved and so there's nothing for us to boast about. God gets the glory.

[ 31 : 16 ] If you belong to the church, this has happened for you. This is the starting point for you. This is the gateway for us to experience the benefits of what Christ has accomplished for us.

Second, those who are part of the church are those who have been placed into a body with Christ as the head. Been placed into a body with Christ as a head.

And this has already happened for those of you who believe. This is something that Christ has already accomplished for us who believe. He's placed us into a body that you belong to God.

And because you belong to God, you belong to the body of Christ. You belong to the people who Christ has drawn into relationship with Him. And that while Jesus came in the flesh, that the outworking of this spiritual life that He's produced in us also has a physical dimension to it.

We see that in Colossians 1, verse 18 when it says, and He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.

[ 32 : 30 ] Jesus is the head of the church. He is the head of the body. He is preeminent. He is overall. He is the one who has the right to call the shots.

And because He is the head and we are the body, the body obeys the head. That's our next point here. The churches are those who follow Christ's instructions.

They follow God's instructions because He is the head and we belong to Him as the body. And we saw all these one another commands as we worked through this last week.

It is encouraging and overwhelming the number of things that we are called to do for one another. Bear one another's burdens, encourage one another, care for one another, admonish one another, exhort one another.

And then we find that this is the will of God for you. This is what God has called us to. You see, the Lord Jesus modeled a life of perfect submission to the Father.

[ 33 : 31 ] And He calls us and indwells us with His Spirit. He empowers us to do this, to carry out these commands. And so Christ has given us some commands.

John chapter 14 verse 15 says this, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Those who love Jesus will do what Jesus says.

And John in his epistle says this, 1 John chapter 5 verse 3, For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.

You see, when you're in love with someone, doing hard things is not so hard. It becomes pretty easy. And the more we grow in love for our Lord Jesus, the easier obedience becomes.

It's not burdensome. It's something that we delight in, something we enjoy. fourth, those who are part of the church are those who pursue spiritual maturity. They pursue spiritual maturity because the word of God is living.

[ 34 : 32 ] It's active. It's sharper than a two-edged sword. And because the word of God is living and it comes and does something for His people, it creates living creatures.

People who are alive. People who grow. People who are stimulated. People who grow in spiritual maturity and love for God and love for one another. We see that in Ephesians 4, verse 15 and 16. It says, Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Do you see all those connective, living, active kinds of words? That the church is growing up. The church is joined together.

The church is equipped and working properly. The church is the one who is making the body grow and it's all bound together, starting and finishing with love. That we grow in love.

[ 35 : 44 ] We grow in spiritual maturity as we're growing in Christ. Fifth, those who are part of the church are those who accept personal accountability. They accept personal accountability.

You see, there are real instructions in how to engage one another, not only in caring for one another's needs, but especially in how to protect one another from the dangers of sin.

We're told to exhort one another. We're told to encourage. We're told to admonish one another.

We're told to restore one another in the spirit of gentleness. We're told to rebuke one another.

We're told to strengthen one another. All of these words that have accountability in mind. And those of you who are parents understand how this works. That fathers are to raise up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

There's some accountability there. There's some instruction there. There's responsibility of parents to their kids to help them grow. And as spiritual leaders, we have a responsibility to you.

[ 36 : 49 ] And as part of the body, you have a responsibility to one another. Hebrews 13, 17 says this, Obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

Let them do it with joy and not with groaning for that would be of no advantage to you. God has put us in community with one another for the sake of spiritual protection and safety and flourishing and we have a responsibility to be accountable to one another in that way.

Sixth, those who are part of the church are those who exercise their spiritual gifts. We saw that at the beginning of chapter 2 in Acts. We saw this church that was indwelt by the Holy Spirit and what do they do? They start practicing spiritual gifts that God has given us as believers a gift through the indwelling power of His Spirit.

It's not meant to be put on the shelf. It's meant to be put to work. God has given us this great responsibility and privilege. We find that in 1 Peter 4 verses 10 and 11.

It says this, As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's very grace. Whoever speaks is one who speaks oracles of God.

[ 38 : 10 ] Whoever serves is one who serves by the strength that God supplies in order that in everything, here it is, the goal, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. We exercise our spiritual gifts not just because we have them, but we do it because of the glory of God.

And finally, those who are part of the church are those who make the gospel visible. They make the gospel visible. You see, our belonging together, our togetherness, helps to reinforce what Christ has accomplished through His work.

If His work of dying on the cross and rising again brings unity to the church, then we demonstrate the outworking of that gospel power by being together, belonging together.

John chapter 17 verses 20 and 21 says this, this is Christ's prayer, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

[ 39 : 30 ] The power of the gospel that's noticeable, observable through a people who are united together. So this group of gathered believers are here not just loosely affiliated, they're gathered together as those who are connected, who are bound, who have this obligation to one another.

And so membership then becomes a visible expression of our belonging together. membership is a way for us to say, God has not just accomplished something, but we recognize the importance of what he's done and we want to affirm that in our expression of opting in and becoming a visible part, an active part of the fellowship that God has already connected us to.

Many of you heard the expression, membership has its privileges, right? And we're acquainted with membership. You'll either have gym memberships or shopping memberships or phone plans, whatever memberships you're a part of, but those memberships in this day and age have a purpose.

It gives us access, it gives us discounts, it gives us convenience, but as long as those memberships serve us well, we keep them. But as soon as those memberships no longer serve us the way we want to, we opt out and we switch allegiance.

That's kind of what we've been conditioned to do as it relates to membership in the world. But the membership that Christ has created is a membership of belonging that happens as long as we are a part of the family of God.

[ 41 : 18 ] And as long as God has put us in community with one another. There is the universal church as it were. We belong to Christ. We belong to all the believers that are in the world.

But we recognize the beauty and uniqueness of the local fellowships that God has put us in connection with and the joy of demonstrating that commitment to that local fellowship through membership.

One of the statistics that I found from the Gallup poll is that in 2023 only 45% of Americans said they belonged to a formal house of worship.

That doesn't even include membership. But in their minds they were a part of a fellowship. That is down from 73% in 1937 and 70% as recently as 1999.

That is the spirit of the age to be disconnected to be autonomous to be independent. But these people in Acts chapter 2 understood that the church was something entirely different.

[ 42 : 34 ] It was not a product to consume. It wasn't a club to sample. It wasn't a place just to access with benefits but a body to belong to. In a world that idolizes independence and freedom and autonomy membership says something entirely different.

It says I want to live the Christian life together. I want to live the Christian life and not remain autonomous. Not to remain unknown.

Not to avoid obligation. I want to be connected to the body that Christ has connected me to. I want to be joined to Christ's people in a way that is visible and meaningful.

So I would encourage those of you who are part of this fellowship to demonstrate the beauty of what Christ has accomplished and to carry out the purposes that God has given to us.

For those of you who are still unsure we have several resources in the back as you're walking out towards the lobby. I want to encourage you to look at those. Some of those are free resources.

[ 43 : 39 ] Some of them are not but they're very helpful in just helping. What is membership? What's it about? Why is it important? And is this something that I should consider? It's been a good it's been good for my own heart to remind myself of what is the church and what is my commitment to the people that God has put me in community with.

May God help us as we consider his word and apply it to our lives. Let's pray. Father thank you for the scripture. Thank you for stimulating us in such a way convicting us in such a way that reminds us of our responsibility first to you in bringing glory to you but also our responsibility to the people you put us in fellowship with.

May we please you and may we be used of you in a way that makes the gospel look beautiful and our savior look precious. we pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen. God bless you. Have a great week. Thank you.